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STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

At the 3948th meeting of the Security Council, held on 25 November 1998 in connection with the Council's consideration of the item entitled "The situation in Georgia", the President of the Security Council made the following statement on behalf of the Council:

"The Security Council has considered the report of the Secretary-General concerning the situation in Abkhazia, Georgia, of 29 October 1998 (S/1998/1012 and Add.1).

"The Security Council remains deeply concerned at the continuing tense and unstable situation in the Gali and Zugdidi regions and at the threat of resumption of serious hostilities. The Council demands that both sides observe strictly all their obligations to refrain from the use of force and to resolve disputed issues by peaceful means only.

"The Security Council welcomes the reinvigoration of the negotiations within the United Nations-led peace process. It particularly welcomes the meeting of both sides on confidence-building measures held in Athens on 16-18 October 1998, the largest and most representative meeting of the parties since the military confrontation of 1993, and the increased bilateral contacts between the two sides. The Council strongly urges the two sides to build on this momentum to widen their commitment to the United Nations-led peace process, to continue to intensify their discussion, in particular within the Coordinating Council, and to expand their relations at all levels. The Council also strongly encourages the parties to work together in order to convene a meeting between the President of Georgia and Mr. Ardzinba and to reach agreements, in particular on the return of refugees and measures for the economic rehabilitation of Abkhazia, Georgia, as a concrete step towards easing tensions and leading to improvement in the security environment. The Council reiterates its call to both sides to display without delay the necessary will to achieve substantial results on the key issues of the negotiations, and calls upon them to implement promptly and in good faith their undertakings, so that living conditions for the population on both sides can be improved by practical confidence-building measures.

"The Security Council strongly condemns the deliberate acts of violence against the personnel of the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG) and of the Collective Peacekeeping Forces of the Commonwealth of Independent States, including the continued laying of mines which also endangers the civilian population and impedes the work of the humanitarian organizations. The Council demands that both sides take determined and prompt measures to put a stop to such acts, which subvert the peace process, and to ensure that the security environment of all international personnel improves significantly.

"The Security Council welcomes the efforts of the Secretary-General aimed at improving the security of UNOMIG, approves his proposal to increase the number of internationally recruited lightly-armed security personnel and additional local security personnel to provide internal security to the Mission's installations, and requests the Secretary-General to keep the security of UNOMIG under constant review taking into account the observations contained in his report.

"The Security Council reminds both sides that the continued commitment of the international community to assist them depends on their progress in achieving peacefully a comprehensive political settlement."